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ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Economic and Social Council decision 1993/235

1. In a note submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1993 (E/1993/82), the Secretary-General transmitted to the Council a proposal for the merger of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The proposal, based on a recommendation made by the high-level panel of advisers on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the Organization, which was endorsed by the Secretary-General, was elaborated by a task force established by the Secretary-General, following discussion in the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW. The intention of the Secretary-General in carrying forward this proposal is to contribute to the achievement of a stronger and more unified programme for the advancement of women within the United Nations as a whole.

2. The task force, chaired by the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, was composed of two members of the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW and two members of the Consultative Committee of UNIFEM, selected by them, 1/ with the assistance of the Directors of the two entities and representatives of UNDP and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat. The report (E/1993/82, annex), which was submitted to the Secretary-General with the unanimous endorsement of the task force, formed the basis for the Secretary-General's submission to the Council.

1/ In the task force, the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW was represented by Aida Gonzalez Martinez (Mexico) and Kristin Tornes (Norway), and the Consultative Committee of UNIFEM by A. Missouri Sherman-Peter (Bahamas) and Ulla Lehmann Nielsen (Denmark).

3. In its decision 1993/235, adopted on 27 July 1993, the Economic and Social Council took note with appreciation of the note by the Secretary-General and agreed that the recommendation to merge INSTRAW with UNIFEM "in pursuance of a stronger, more unified programme for the advancement of women could proceed, subject to the recommendations set out in paragraph 13 of the report, in particular the need for a proper analysis of the legal, financial and administrative implications of the merger, and subject to consideration by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session".

4. The present report, prepared pursuant to this decision, is submitted to the General Assembly in order to facilitate its consideration of the matter, as provided for in the Council's decision. The report takes into full account the recommendations outlined in paragraph 13 of the task force report (E/1993/82, annex), referred to in the Council's decision. It also provides an analysis of the implications of the proposal, as requested by the Council.

5. In accordance with paragraph 13 of the task force report the merger should take place under conditions which would make it possible:

(a) To enhance the coordination and reinforcement of the linkages and commonalities of the programmes of the two entities without detriment to the comparative advantages, characteristics and distinct identity of each, including the capacity to carry out independent research and related training activities for the advancement of women;

(b) To build fully on the very significant contributions made by the Government of the Dominican Republic;

(c) To avoid any decrease in the flow of resources; on the contrary the merger should be pursued in such a way as to fully mobilize not only the resources of traditional donors to each of the two entities but also other sources of funding in support of the strengthened joint programme.

6. As indicated above, the overall objective of this important aspect of the restructuring of the economic and social sector of the Organization is to contribute to the achievement of a stronger and more unified programme for the advancement of women within the United Nations as a whole. Having considered various options to this end, and following consultations, including with the host Government of INSTRAW, the Secretary-General, in line with the conditions outlined above, wishes to confirm that a fusion of the two entities, which would not preserve the distinct identity of the two programmes, would not be conducive to this objective. In the Secretary-General's view, this objective can best be achieved through streamlined arrangements which would place the two entities under a single management and reporting mechanism, while, at the same time, maintaining and taking maximum advantage of the comparative advantages and characteristics of each of the two programmes.

7. In the same context, the Secretary-General attaches importance to a continuing presence of UNIFEM/INSTRAW in Santo Domingo, to be supplemented by related measures which would further strengthen such presence and help ensure that gender issues are effectively pursued in a broader range of training programmes of the Organization as a whole. Accordingly, a careful balance should be introduced between those aspects of the activities of the two

programmes, particularly those related to executive direction and management, which are best carried out from a central location, bearing in mind, inter alia, the redeployment of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Secretary-General for the Fourth World Conference on Women in the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, and those activities of both programmes which are best carried out in a decentralized manner in a developing country location. The arrangements to be made should also enhance long-term prospects for access to resources in general, and release resources to strengthen the capacity to undertake research and training activities in particular.

8. In furtherance of these objectives, and in line with the considerations outlined in paragraph 4 above, the following administrative, financial and legal arrangements are proposed:

General

(a) The two programmes would be placed under common management;

(b) The mandates of both programmes would be maintained in their entirety;

(c) The distinct identity of the INSTRAW Trust Fund and of the United Nations Development Fund for Women would be maintained and they would be separately open to contributions including at the annual United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities;

(d) All arrangements for the operation and control of the United Nations Development Fund for Women would also apply to the INSTRAW Trust Fund;

(e) The same staff and financial regulations and rules and operating procedures which currently apply to UNIFEM would also apply mutatis mutandis to the totality of the combined programmes, including the research and training activities hitherto carried out by INSTRAW;

INSTRAW programme

(f) A distinct research and training programme would be maintained and headed at the same level as the present position of Chief of Research and Training in INSTRAW;

(g) In order to provide expert advice in relation to this research and training programme, an advisory group on research and training would be established, as recommended in paragraph 13 of the task force report. The group would be composed of a limited number of experts in the areas of concentration of INSTRAW's research and training mandate, selected with due regard to equitable geographical distribution;

UNIFEM programme

(h) The UNIFEM component of the combined programme would be unchanged, except for the modification in reporting arrangements referred to under (j) below;

Governance and reporting arrangements

(i) Bearing in mind the expert advice in respect of the research and training programme to be provided by the advisory group referred to under (g) above, the Consultative Committee of UNIFEM would exercise oversight both for the activities of UNIFEM and for the research and training programme which has heretofore come within the purview of the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW;

(j) Other aspects of the reporting arrangements would be unified and streamlined in a way which would eliminate duplication of reporting mechanisms, while enabling all intergovernmental bodies involved in the governance of either UNIFEM or INSTRAW to exercise their respective responsibilities in relation to the totality of the combined programmes, in particular:

(i) The secretariat would prepare a biennial report on programme activities covering both operational (UNIFEM) and research and training activities (INSTRAW) for submission to the Consultative Committee. The report would be submitted to the Economic and Social Council, after review by the Commission on the Status of Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Governing Council, to ensure that these activities respond to the overall strategy of the United Nations on women, and would then be transmitted by the Council to the General Assembly;

(ii) Related biennial budget requirements would be submitted to the Consultative Committee at the same time as the biennial report on programme activities. These requirements would be incorporated in the UNDP biennial budget estimates submitted by the Administrator, through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, to the Governing Council for approval.

9. With regard to legal implications, as indicated in paragraph 2 above, the Council, in its decision 1993/235, agreed that the proposed measures could proceed subject to consideration by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. Thus, should the Assembly endorse the proposal, the Secretary-General would implement it on the basis of the above-mentioned decision of the Council and the endorsement by the Assembly.

10. The proposed arrangements would not require any substantive changes in the statutory provisions relating to UNIFEM, the only adjustment required being the change in reporting procedures, which would be unified as proposed in paragraph 8 (j) above.

11. As far as INSTRAW is concerned, as noted above, its main objectives and functions would likewise not be affected, since under the proposed arrangements the identity of the INSTRAW programme would be retained. However, as described above, the streamlining would lead to modified administrative, financial and structural arrangements for INSTRAW, replacing the current ones which would be considered as rescinded.

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12. In line with the relevant recommendation of the task force, the Secretary-General is very conscious of the need to build on the very significant contribution made by the Government of the Dominican Republic and is consulting with the Government on different options which would serve to further an important objective of restructuring, namely, the decentralization of specific advisory and training activities closer to the countries they serve.

13. Firstly, Santo Domingo could serve as the major location for training programmes carried out by the proposed joint UNIFEM/INSTRAW programme. In the context of the UNIFEM programme, these are estimated at some four meetings/seminars/workshops of varying duration per annum. A number of meetings/workshops within the INSTRAW programme could likewise be held in Santo Domingo.

14. UNIFEM could establish a presence in the Dominican Republic to provide overall management of its Caribbean programme activities. UNIFEM total annual programme expenditure in the Caribbean for 1993 will exceed $500,000, which represents "seed money" aimed at mobilizing larger sums.

15. Secondly, planning is currently under way for the creation of a "capacity-building" centre for Latin America and the Caribbean, along the lines of the capacity-building activities currently being carried out by the UNDP Office for Projects Services (OPS) in the Asian region, utilizing a self-supporting institute (the Asian and Pacific Programme for Development Training and Communication Planning, located in Manila). The proposed new centre would be financed jointly by the United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation, UNDP/OPS and bilateral donors. Additional financial support would also be sought from concerned financial institutions, such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.

16. The centre would function as a training facility for officials from Latin America and the Caribbean in areas of particular importance to their capacity-building effort, such as governance, administrative reform, private sector development, public financial management, and programme management. The centre would be managed by a core staff to be supplemented, when training courses take place, by trainers and consultants, as required. At this stage, it is anticipated that a minimum of eight training courses/seminars per year could be organized at the centre, to be increased, subject to demand and availability of funding.

17. The availability of suitable premises for this centre would greatly facilitate the development of the institution, since it would reduce operating costs to a minimum and allow utilization of all available resources for training purposes. The interest of the Government of the Dominican Republic in hosting this centre in Santo Domingo is currently being explored.

18. The two options outlined above would be mutually reinforcing, with the continuing presence of UNIFEM/INSTRAW ensuring that gender issues are fully taken into account in the training programmes and related activities of the proposed "capacity-building" centre.

19. The present Headquarters Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of the Dominican Republic would need to be revised to reflect the

implications of the new arrangements as well as further agreements to be reached concerning the deployment of activities to Santo Domingo, in the light of the options outlined above.

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20. It is estimated that economies of scale resulting from placing the two programmes under common direction would result in savings of some $0.6 million which, subject to the availability of funds, may be used to strengthen research and training activities. While there would be a one-time non-recurrent cost of less than $300,000 for transitional measures, it is estimated, taking into account the fact that savings in operational costs would be redeployed to research and training activities, that the resources available to INSTRAW for the biennium 1994-1995 would still be more than sufficient to meet that cost.

CONCLUSIONS

21. The Secretary-General trusts that the above arrangements meet the conditions set out in paragraph 13 of the task force report, which were specifically highlighted in the Council decision and are summarized in paragraph 5 above. In particular, the above arrangements have been designed to maintain the comparative advantages, characteristics and distinct identities of the two entities, while serving to reinforce the linkages and commonalities of their respective programmes. Such linkages and commonalities have been amply illustrated in the task force report before the Council and need not be repeated here.

22. Equally important, the above arrangements should result in the strengthening of the overall capacity of the Organization to undertake research and training programmes in support of the advancement of women, as well as enhancing the flow of resources available for these activities.

23. In particular, in line with the guidelines contained in the task force report, these arrangements should, on the one hand, "enable INSTRAW to keep its finger on the pulse of the research needs of operational activities for the advancement of women. On the other hand, UNIFEM would have ready access to research outputs that can be adapted and applied at both the policy and grass-roots levels. A closer relationship should have the desirable effect of a more coherent approach to addressing problems of women in the developing world" (E/1993/82, annex, para. 10).

24. It may also be expected that the arrangements outlined above, designed to draw maximum advantage from commonalities between the two entities while maintaining the respective identities of the INSTRAW Trust Fund and the United Nations Development Fund for Women, will enhance the capacity for fund-raising and the flow of resources for both programmes. In addition, as indicated, administrative savings are envisaged to benefit substantive programmes.

25. Other recommendations of the task force concerning the strengthening of the interactions of the two programmes with the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council are similarly reflected in the new reporting arrangements outlined in paragraph 8 (j) above.

26. Finally, the above arrangements are intended to meet the concerns of the task force, which are fully shared by the Secretary-General, to build fully on the generous contributions made by the Government of the Dominican Republic.

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27. The Secretary-General has been concerned to ensure that the modalities envisaged for the merger of these two programmes should be in line with the approaches underlying his overall restructuring effort, which involve a careful balance between, on the one hand, actions aimed at achieving a greater integration of the relevant economic and social activities within the Organization and, on the other hand, the decentralization of specific advisory and training activities closer to the countries they serve. In this perspective, the measures outlined in the present report should contribute to the success of the Fourth World Conference on Women and to furthering a comprehensive strategy to strengthen efforts in the United Nations system, at the global, regional and country levels, to improve the situation of women.